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Eglin highlights weapons at Paris Air Show

by Jake Swinson, Air Armament Center Public Affairs

EGLIN AFB, Fla. — Eglin was well represented at the prestigious Paris Air Show last month with a display exhibit in the Department of Defense booth. The Eglin display was a joint effort between the Air Armament Center and the Air Force Research Laboratory's Munitions Directorate.

Among the materials available were DVD movies depicting Eglin weapons being tested, brochures and fact sheets outlining the base's facilities and their capabilities, and poster board displays showcasing Eglin's state-of-the-art technologies. The favorite attraction in the Eglin exhibit was a full-scale model of the miniature cruise missile known as the Low-Cost Autonomous Attack System. Another popular display item was a scale model of four Small Smart Bombs loaded on a prototype pneumatic ejector rack.

The Eglin delegation was led by AAC Commander Maj. Gen. Michael Kostelnik, a strong advocate of Eglin participation in the international exposition.

"Eglin's role in arming the Air Force and its crucial role in the successful outcome of the Desert Storm and Kosovo Campaigns has drawn international attention to our smart weaponry. The international gathering is a great forum for reaching thousands of military personnel, aerospace industry executives and aviation enthusiast and let them see what they have been reading about in the news media," the general explained.

Col. David J. Eichhorn, who relinquished command of AAC's 46th Test Wing Tuesday to depart for his new assignment as commander of the Arnold Engineering Development Center in Tennessee, also attended the air show.

"'Air Show' is a bit of a misnomer," Eichhorn said. "I, personally, saw very little air show. It's very much a 'trade' show. I talked business and partnership opportunities with most of the 46th Test Wing's primary customers."

"The who's who of aviation were gathered at the event, making it the most cost-effective way I know to forge the professional relationships we need. International interests in using Eglin's air armament expertise and capability is growing, and I expect we'll see more coalition partner testing here in the future," Eichhorn said.

AFRL's Munitions Directorate at Eglin also has a strong interest in fostering international participation in its technology development programs, and is already involved in this arena.

"From the lab's perspective, we are allowed to have international data exchange agreements with other nations to share technologies that reflect 'quid pro quo' arrangements where there is no exchange of money, or even exchange of hardware," said Col. Norman Leonpacher, who heads the directorate's Assessment and Demonstrations Division. "Both sides walk away from the table with benefits from the tests."

The role of the senior officers at the trade show related to networking, but younger officers at the trade show approached it from a different perspective. 2nd Lt. Rebecca Ortiz, a chemical engineer with AFRL's Munitions Directorate, was an especially valuable member of the Eglin team — not only does she work with the latest technology but she also speaks fluent French.

"I had never attended an air show," stated Ortiz, "and I was excited to be selected to attend the Paris Air Show. A lot of the young French officers would talk to me about what they did in the French Air Force and were eager to find out what they would be doing if they were in the U.S. Air Force. It was surprising to learn how little we knew about them and vice versa. We developed camaraderie and benefited from the humanistic side. I think the French respected us more because we had some French-speaking attendees," she said.

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“The Paris Air Show provided a wonderful opportunity for the Air Force Research Lab to showcase its technologies in an international arena,” said Col. Tom Masiello, director of AFRL’s Munitions Directorate. “Through these contacts we hope to forge new cooperative agreements that will allow us to share technologies around the globe.” @